

To:
Honorable Edward Meyer
Honorable Linda Gentile
Environment Committee
Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Senator Meyer and Representative Gentile:

As the Chair of the Candlewood Lake Authority , and chairman of the CLA sponsored regional Aquatic Invasive Species / Zebra Mussel Task Force and 15 year resident on Candlewood Lake I am a committed lake advocate and active user of CT's irreplaceable water resources.

I am writing to ask your help in addressing one of the most significant inland water resource crises faced in Connecticut, and indeed throughout the nation. Aquatic invasive species (AIS) are plants and animals that typically are non-native, are spread primarily on trailered watercraft, are introduced into new aquatic environments daily, colonize and out-compete native species. They are grim news wherever they are detected ... and these locations are spreading unfettered statewide.

If left unchecked, AIS cause major ecological, economic, and recreational damage to CT's waters -- lakes, reservoirs, rivers and ponds -- enjoyed by all State residents, not simply those living nearby. They can threaten our ability to maintain safe, reliable, and economically sustainable fresh water supplies, hamstringing our industries, negatively impact real estate values, as well as water and power production capabilities. They can also pave the way for other inland water threats like cyanotoxins from cyanobacteria, creating human health risks.

Though we have worked tirelessly on a local level with many local communities, user groups and stakeholders to address these issues we cannot provide the true level of management and control required. The statewide risk of AIS contagion cannot be solved by local municipalities or communities adjacent to these waters. Local lake advocates cannot cope with the myriad of actions necessary to contain the AIS advance. The defensive dollars required are simply too great as witnessed by other states grappling with rapid spread; to prevent much less control these aggressive species will require a significant commitment by Connecticut if we are to truly address the problem. Just consider these profound economic impacts and potential negative outcomes if we are to ignore reality:

1. Rising cost to control spread – Millions of dollars are already spent annually by individual tax payers and municipalities to combat invasive plants and animals; this will only continue to rise as more lakes and waterways become infested with invasive species. Prevention is cheaper than the dollar cost to control.

2. Impacts on property values and tax revenues – Impacts on recreational values of lakes, ponds and reservoirs by invasive species will reduce lakeside property values which translate to reduced tax revenues and regional stresses.

3.Damages to private property (e.g. boat engine damage from clogged water intakes, encrusted docks and beachfronts) – This will increase and negatively impact tourism industries targeting recreational boating and fishing communities.

4.Increasing financial losses to our economy – If Connecticut does not significantly step up its commitment to fight AIS, the damage to our economy and the water-related property tax base will increase unabated.

The invasive species problem in CT is escalating out of control. We are witnessing new invasion sites of milfoil, zebra mussels, Asian clams, fanwort, Hydrilla and others – all of which have the capacity to do substantial harm to water-dependent industries, sport fisheries, lake ecology, water-based recreation, and the simple and safe enjoyment of these precious resources by our public.

It is important to emphasize that prevention is far more effective -- and far less costly -- than attempted containment following infestation. Indeed, some studies estimate that control of these species, once introduced, can cost upwards of 20 times the expense of preemptive action. While prevention can be in the cards, current aquatic invasive control methods are not effective in eradication, and typically require costly repetitive treatments to limit spread. So time is not our friend as these species proliferate at will.

This is why I am joining with others statewide to urge that the Environment Committee take this threat very seriously. A concerted and coordinated statewide effort is essential if we are to ‘win,’ and a strong and sustainable financial solution must be found and aggressively pursued if Connecticut’s waters are to be saved from these insidious invaders.

Please do everything possible to find the will and the means, and to develop a viable funding approach that can help preserve our State’s invaluable resources. Once invaded, the game could be over. This, we cannot allow to happen and therefore your timely help is essential in addressing one of the primary environmental issues of our day: stemming the AIS tide in order to protect our vital water resources for the benefit of this great state and its people.
Respectfully submitted,

Phyllis Schaer
Chairman / Candlewood Lake Authority
AIS / ZMT Chair
President / Holiday Point Homeowners Association

[\(860\) 354-6928](tel:8603546928) - CLA phone

Residence:
6 Oak Drive
Sherman, CT 06784